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Environmental Quality Council

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Box 215, Capitol Station, Helena, MT 59601

Senator Elmer Flynn, Chairman

June 17, 1974

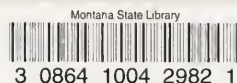
Loren L. Bahls, Acting Director

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SALINE SEEP ECOLOGICAL IMPACTS STUDY ANNOUNCED

The Resources Development Internship Program, Boulder, Colorado, has announced the appointment of Michael Harlow to a summer internship with the Montana Environmental Quality Council (EQC) in Helena. Mr. Harlow will be working with EQC in researching the ecological impacts of dryland saline seep in Montana.

Saline seeps are recently developed saline soils in nonirrigated areas that are wet some or all of the time, often with white salt crusts, and where crop or grass production is reduced or eliminated. A 1973 Soil Conservation Service (SCS) survey estimated that 153,000 acres of dryland agricultural land had been lost to saline seep in Montana, and over a quarter of a million square miles of dryland cropland is thought to be threatened in the Northern Great Plains area.

This research project will complement studies now being planned by the Department of State Lands for the Montana Saline Advisory Council. It will supplement on-going agricultural studies being conducted by the SCS and the Agricultural Extension Service of Montana State University, and studies of saline water pollution by the Department of Mines and Geology and the federal Environmental Protection Agency in the Highwood Bench area near Ft. Benton. It is hoped that the information generated by Mr. Harlow's research will aid in the battle to control this major threat to the economic life of Montana and neighboring states.

Mr. Harlow will survey and document the effects of saline seep on land use, plants, livestock, wildlife and birds, fisheries, domestic water, and downstream users. Although the agricultural damage done by the spreading saline seep problem is fairly well understood, very little is known about these other ecological effects caused by the highly saline ground water coming to the surface. Efforts were begun under the now disbanded Governor's Saline Seep Emergency Committee to survey farmers and ranchers concerning the extent and nature of saline seep on their lands.

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Due to the complexity of the saline seep problem, and its close resemblance to other types of salinity problems in Montana, this survey could not be done during the spring agricultural program sign-up. Mr. Harlow will begin the much-needed task of gathering first-hand reports of saline seep damage to livestock, wildlife, and water quality. He is requesting the help of Montanans who have knowledge of ecological damage from saline seep.

If you know of an incident in which saline waters from alkali seeps in dryland farming areas has caused damage to plants, animals, or water quality, you can help. This information is being collected in an effort to determine the extent and seriousness of ecological damage by saline seep, and all reports will be followed up by Mr. Harlow or a study team from the Department of State Lands.

Any or all of the following information would be useful to Mr. Harlow: Name and Address of person operating affected land; Date and Location of incident (if known); Description of incident (type, extent, and suspected cause.). In addition, Mr. Harlow would greatly appreciate leads concerning other people who may have seep damage and who should be contacted by the researchers.

If you can help, please contact Michael Harlow (406-449-3742 or Environmental Quality Council, Capitol Station, Helena 59601) as soon as possible.

The project will be completed at the end of the summer, at which time Mr. Harlow's findings and recommendations will be printed by the Resources Development Internship Program and released by the Environmental Quality Council.

The purpose of the Resources Development Internship Program is to bring community service organizations together with institutions of higher education and their students in the West for the benefit of all. The Resources Development Internship Program is administered by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education. WICHE is a public agency which helps the 13 Western states work together to increase educational opportunities for western youth, to improve programs of universities and colleges, to expand the supply of specialized manpower, and to inform the public of higher education needs.

SUBDIVISION SUMMARY

The EQC staff has recently compiled a summary of statistics for 367 subdivisions for which environmental impact statements (EIS) have been prepared by the Water Quality Bureau of the Department of Health and Environmental Sciences (DHES). The period covered by the summary began with the first subdivision EIS submitted in February of 1972 and ended on April 30, 1974.

The 367 subdivisions covered a total of 11,728 acres. A total of 10,526 lots were submitted to DHES for removal of sanitary restrictions and of these, 10,357 lots were approved and thereby made available for residential use.

Assuming an average family size of three persons and single family first home dwellings, these lots could accommodate 31,071 people. Some of the lots, however, were intended for second home and/or multiple dwelling units.

The average subdivision consisted of 32 acres and 29 lots. The average lot size was 1.1 acres. Geographically, most subdivision activity during the period of review occurred in the Broad Valley Rockies environmental region of western Montana with other significant pockets of activity in the Red Lodge and Billings areas. The four counties with the greatest number of subdivisions were as follows: Gallatin, 65; Flathead, 57; Yellowstone, 40; and Missoula, 25.

NEW ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENTS JUNE 1-15

<u>Date Received</u>	<u>STATE --- Subject</u>	<u>Originating Agency</u>	
6-03-74	Many Lakes Vacation Village No. IV. 82 lots on 147 acres. 7 mi. n. of Bigfork in "Creston Pot-hole" area. Lots vary from 1.0 to 2.5 acres.	DHES Klsp1.	N
6-05-74	T-Bone Feeders, Inc. Feedlot No. 2. Request for a waste discharge permit. Located n.e. of Shepherd. Capacity for approx. 30,000 cattle.	DHES	N
6-06-74	The Heiken Land & Livestock Company. Request for a waste discharge permit. Located s.w. of Lavina. Capacity for approx. 15,000 cattle.	DHES	N
6-11-74	Roger's Trailer Court. Proposed expansion of 5 space trailer ct. to a 5 acre, 13 space mobile home facility. 1 mi. s.e. of Kalispell City Limits.	DHES Klsp1.	N
6-11-74	Stillwater Terrace. 7 lots on 5.5 acres 2 mi. n. of Kalispell. Average lot size is 21,000 to 32,000 ft. ²	DHES Klsp1.	N
6-11-74	R-J's Northern Park. 18 space mobile home park proposed for 3.4 acres. 1 mi. n. of Kalispell on Old Whitefish Highway. Average space size is 3,200 sq. ft.	DHES Klsp1.	N
6-11-74	Fairmont Heights Subdivision. 9 lots on 20.8 acres, 5 mi. n. of Kalispell.	DHES Klsp1.	N
6-12-74	Winifred Bridge Site Study. Proposed bridge site n.w. of Winifred across Missouri River at Chouteau-Fergus Co. line on MT Sec. Rte. No. 236.	DH	F

New environmental impact statements (continued).

<u>Date Received</u>	<u>FEDERAL --- Subject</u>	<u>Originating Agency</u>	
6-07-74	Emergency Conservation Measures Program. Measures approved under this program include removing debris from farmland; grading, shaping, releveling of damaged farmland; restoring conservation structures; installing emergency wind control measures and similar land rehabilitation measures for farmlands damaged by natural disasters.	USDA/BPP	D
6-12-74	Emergency Watershed Protection Program authorized by Sec. 216 of the Flood Control Act of 1950, P. L. 81-516 (33 USC 70 1b-1). Authorizes measures to be installed to safeguard lives and property from floods and the products of erosion whenever natural elements cause a sudden impairment of a watershed.	USDA/SCS/ BPP	D

D--draft statement	DHES--Dept. of Health & Environmental Sciences
EW--emergency waiver	DH--Department of Highways
F--final statement	USDA/SCS/BPP--U.S. Dept. of Interior/ Soil Conservation Service
N--negative declaration	Office of Budget and Program Planning

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